

## Camp Kahlert on Chesapeake Bay



This is a tough one. I might have this photo or a similar one in the old scrapbook.

Notice certain things about the photo to figure how who, what, and when. Mine is a guess, but probably fairly accurate.

We're dressed up. The person between us is "in charge". I guess she's a camp counselor and we're wearing our "whites" because it's Sunday and we're about to get scrambled eggs and bacon in the mess hall. It's probably visiting day and that explains the bow in my hair. Someone obviously "did" our hair for us, maybe the nice counselor standing in between.

Patti's still taller than I am which means it's before we were 15. I think we're about 9 here.

This is the camp that we made it to Third Float in swimming, which is the best you can do. Patti dived off the big green float one day and hit a submerged log covered with barnacles. Her shoulder was badly cut and bleeding. She rose back to the murky surface of the Chesapeake Bay waters and was groggy.

Luckily, an alert counselor pulled her out. The camp nurse taped her shoulder together, but it actually required stitches and about 2 or 3 years after this, she had official surgery on the shoulder which explains why her left (?) shoulder carries an impressive vertical scar. (How she got a matching scar on her other shoulder is another story).

The camp has to be the Girl Scout camp, Camp Kahlert, we went to located on the Chesapeake Bay in the state of Maryland. We were transported to and from the camp on a big bus from the downtown "Y" in Washington D.C.

At this camp, I got a bee sting so severe that my foot swelled up triple size. I had to stay in bed at the Nurse's cabin on the screened-in porch and wait for the swelling to go down. One day, I hopped to the nearby outhouse, a two-seater with a separating divider. When I sat down, I saw a giant snake coiled up under the separating partition. It was inches from my foot.

You never saw any one move so fast, hopping and on a crutch, as I screamed bloody murder and tumbled out of the outhouse door. It was Rest Hour, but I didn't care. Counselors came running. Someone killed the snake, but I don't remember how.

An aside: Maybe it was a water moccasin, but then again, I'm probably thinking of Camp Mystic in Hunt, Texas, where I was a counselor after my freshman year at Rice. We believed the swimming was "safe" at Camp Mystic because we were told that snakes don't bite under water. They bite above water and you can always see them coming. Very funny. At Camp Mystic I earned \$50 for 6 weeks as a counselor. I shot my entire wad on a pink leather jacket which I wore for many years.

Back to the photo:

When we returned from the camp, Mother had us write it up and eventually it was in the Washington Star newspaper, along with our photos. Miss Williams at Phoebe Hearst Elementary School put it on the bulletin board. This means we were in 4th grade by that time and the year was 1944, which means we were 9-ish

The following summer, 1945, Mother sent us to Mr. and Mrs. White's farm in Herdon, Virginia. Patti had to go home early because she ate too much corn and was sick to her stomach. But she got to witness the end of WW II downtown which occurred simultaneously. That writeup got our pictures plus a cartoon in the paper again and I remember we were in 5th grade where we had Miss Duvall. Miss Duvall was famous for featuring the Christmas play, Scrooge. David Radue won the main part, but most everyone else was "something" in the play. Miss Williams was remembered for having us copy the poem, "Hiawatha" by Longfellow, day after day after day. "On the shores of Gitchee Goomie, stood a . . . ." etc. Miss Williams emphasized the lilting rhythm of the poem.

Probably more information than you wanted, but my memories got carried away.

Love and blessings, Penn